

THE MAXX

THE
ORIGIN
OF
MR GONE



image COMICS PRESENTS:



story & art
SAM KIETH

finishes
JIM SINCLAIR

story editor/lettering
MIKE HEISLER

color
STEVE OLIFF
and OLYOPTICS

logo
CHANCE WOLF

film output
TONY KELLY
and KELL-O-GRAPHICS

OLYOPTICS:

Tracey Anderson, Michael (Jerm) Jeremiah,
Patti Stratton Jordan, Steve Oliff.

FOR IMAGE COMICS

Executive Director:
LARRY MARDER

Art Director:
DOUG GRIFFITH

Production Manager:
RONNA COULTER

Graphic Design:
KENNY FELIX

Distribution:
GERMAINE ZACHARIAH

Accounting Administrator:
LEE PATIN

Communications Director
KELLY VAN LANDINGHAM

MAXX #26. AUGUST 1996. FIRST PRINTING. An Image Comics Title published by Image Comics, 1440 N. Harbor Boulevard, #305 Fullerton, CA 92635. Entire contents TM and © 1996 Sam Kieth, all rights reserved. Any similarities to persons living or dead is purely coincidental. Iago says, "Hugs, not drugs." With the exception of artwork used for review purposes, none of the contents of this publication may be reprinted without the permission of Sam Kieth. Send correspondence to: Sam Kieth, 4363 Hazel Avenue, Suite 1-285, Fair Oaks, California, 95628. (nghtime@aol.com). Publishers and creator assume no responsibility for unsolicited materials or classified ads.

PRINTED IN CANADA.



I KNOW.
I KNOW.

I PROMISED.

SO I
LIED.

BESIDES, DADDY
POINTING OUT TO
ME WHERE HE KEEPS
HIS DIARY, THEN
FORBIDDING ME TO
READ IT...WELL...

C'MON! IT'S
OBVIOUS HE
WANTS ME TO
KNOW ABOUT
HIS LIFE.

OKAY,
I JUST
WANT TO
KNOW.

BESIDES, AFTER THE
DOO-DOO WEEK I'VE
HAD--DISSECTING FAIRIES,
TELLING NORBERT ABOUT
HOW I LET JULIE DOWN
SO LONG AGO, THEN
FINALLY WORKING UP THE
GUTS TO ADMIT IT TO
HER, AND THEN FINDING
OUT....

BUT PART OF ME
JUST CAN'T SHAKE
THE FEELING THAT I'M
WRONG, THAT JULIE'S
ALIVE OUT THERE,
SOMEWHERE...

...LIKE I SAID,
A HELL OF
A WEEK.

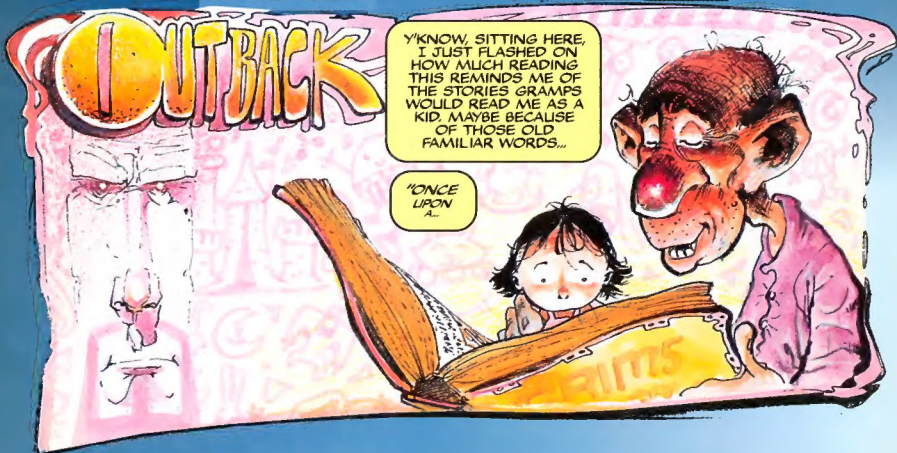
I CAN'T SAY
GOODBYE TO
HER YET--

I WON'T.

OKAY, HERE WE
ARE... "THE BOOK
OF GONE, DIARY
OF ARTEMUS
PENDER GONE,
PART ONE, THE
ROAD DOWN".

Y'KNOW, SITTING HERE,
I JUST FLASHED ON
HOW MUCH READING
THIS REMINDS ME OF
THE STORIES GRAMPS
WOULD READ ME AS A
KID. MAYBE BECAUSE
OF THOSE OLD
FAMILIAR WORDS...

"ONCE
UPON
A...



PATTERNS.

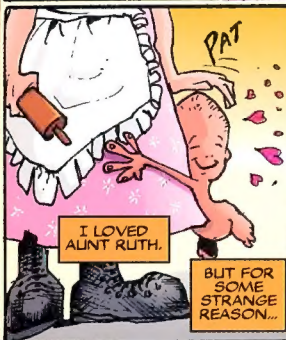
AS A BOY, WHEN-
EVER LIFE GOT
ROUGH, I'D LOOK
UP AT THE PATTERNS
ON MY CEILING...

...AND FLOAT
AWAY.

MY FOLKS
DIED WHEN I
WAS LITTLE.

I WAS SENT
TO LIVE WITH
MY AUNT RUTH.

MY ESCAPE.
MY REFUGE.



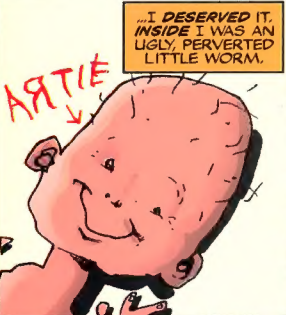
I LOVED
AUNT RUTH.

BUT FOR
SOME
STRANGE
REASON...

...I GREW
UP HATING
AND FEARING
WOMEN.
THEY WERE
EVIL. I WAS
SURE OF IT.

EXCEPT
AUNT RUTH,
OF COURSE.

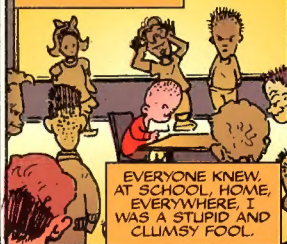
SOMETIMES I'D
DO WRONG, AND
BE PUNISHED.
BUT I ALWAYS
KNEW WHY...



...I DESERVED IT.
INSIDE I WAS AN
UGLY, PERVERTED
LITTLE WORM.

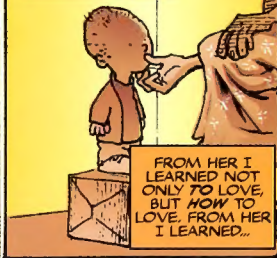
I DID NOT KNOW
HOW I GOT TO BE
THIS WAY. I ONLY
KNEW I WAS.

$4+4=8$



EVERYONE KNEW.
AT SCHOOL, HOME,
EVERYWHERE, I
WAS A STUPID AND
CLUMSY FOOL.

MY ONLY SOLACE
WAS AUNT RUTH.



FROM HER I
LEARNED NOT
ONLY TO LOVE,
BUT HOW TO
LOVE. FROM HER
I LEARNED...

...PATTERNS.

THEY
TAKE YOU
AWAY...

...HELP YOU
FORGET...

...NOT BE
THERE.

BY THE TIME I WAS 11, I WAS DETERMINED TO FIND OUT WHY I WAS SUCH A **DISAPPOINTMENT** TO AUNT RUTH, AND EVERYONE ELSE.



I READ EVERYTHING I COULD UNDERSTAND. PHYSICS, METAPHYSICS, PHILOSOPHY. BUT NOTHING HELPED. I LONGED FOR MAGIC POWERS TO HELP ME ESCAPE MY MISERABLE LIFE. BUT MOSTLY I JUST READ FOR THE SAME REASON I LOOKED AT WALLPAPER...

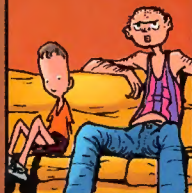
...TO
ESCAPE.



BY THAT TIME, AUNT RUTH NEEDED MORE AND MORE CARE, WHICH I RESENTED.



SHE HIRED A "BABY SITTER". **DEXTER**. HE'D LAUGH AND BEAT ME UP WHEN WE WERE ALONE...

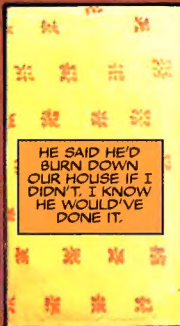


...AND FORCED ME TO DO...

...OTHER STUFF...



HE SAID HE'D BURN DOWN OUR HOUSE IF I DIDN'T. I KNOW HE WOULD'VE DONE IT.



I REMEMBER THINKING THAT THIS MUST BE WHAT BABY SITTERS DO.

I HATED HIM.



AFTER SEVERAL MONTHS HE QUIT. I DON'T KNOW WHY.



NEXT AUNT RUTH GOT SOME GIRL TO TAKE OVER. LUCKY ME.



AT LEAST *THIS* ONE DIDN'T BEAT ME UP.

BUT I KNEW WHAT WAS EXPECTED...



HEY, YOU LITTLE PERVERT! STOP THAT!

...OR THOUGHT I DID.



AUNT RUTH BEAT ME HARDER THAN SHE EVER HAD BEFORE. SHE WANTED TO KNOW WHERE I HAD LEARNED STUFF LIKE THAT.



I NEVER TOLD HER. SHE'D NEVER HAVE BELIEVED ME. I WAS AFRAID "BEING WITH **DEXTER**" HAD TURNED ME INTO A *SISSY*. I WOULD NEVER TELL ANYONE ABOUT THAT.



THAT NIGHT I RAN AWAY. IT WAS NO GREAT LOSS, BECAUSE BEING IN THAT HOUSE WITH AUNT RUTH ONLY REMINDED ME WHAT A WORTHLESS AND ROTTEN KID I WAS.

SCREW WALLPAPER. I'D LITERALLY ESCAPE!

OR SO I THOUGHT.

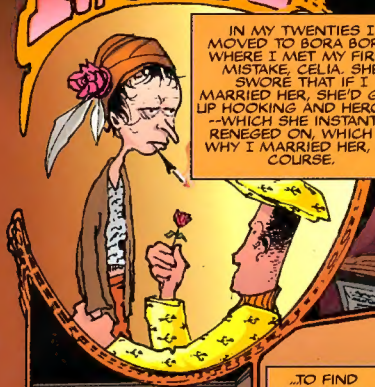


1st WIFE

IN MY TWENTIES I MOVED TO BORA BORA, WHERE I MET MY FIRST MISTAKE, CELIA. SHE SWORE THAT IF I MARRIED HER, SHE'D GIVE UP HOOKING AND HEROIN --WHICH SHE INSTANTLY RENEGED ON, WHICH IS WHY I MARRIED HER, OF COURSE.

IT WAS ABOUT THIS TIME THAT I SET OUT TO LEARN WHY WOMEN SCARED AND ANGERED ME SO. IT WAS PUZZLING, ASIDE FROM THE OCCASIONAL PUNISHMENT, MY AUNT HAD SHOWN ME NOTHING BUT LOVE.

I DIDN'T GET IT, WHERE DID IT COME FROM, THIS FEAR OF THE FEMININE? AND WHY WERE CELIA'S WORST QUALITIES THOSE THAT KEPT ME WITH HER?



I OFTEN CAME HOME...



...TO FIND HER STRUNG OUT. WHEN SHE AWOKE...



...I'D BE BLAMED.



SHE'D YELL AND SCREAM, THEN APOLOGIZE AFTERWARDS.

THESE ARE THE BEST PARTS



THEN I'D FEEL SECRETLY SUPERIOR.



AND THEN, EVENTUALLY, I'D FEEL SORRY FOR HER...

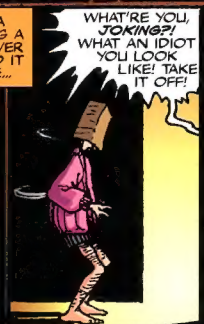
...AND THEN I'D "HELP" HER.



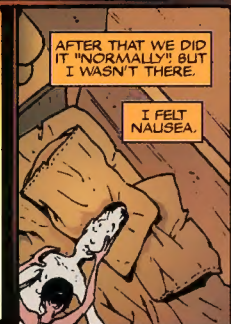
A JUNKIE'S RARELY IN THE MOOD, AND I GOT PHYSICALLY ILL AT THE THOUGHT OF NORMAL RELATIONS. I DON'T KNOW WHY.



I'D DEVELOPED A FETISH OF WEARING A PARKA AND BAG OVER MY HEAD. I SHARED IT WITH CELIA ONCE...



WHAT'RE YOU, JOKING? WHAT AN IDIOT YOU LOOK LIKE! TAKE IT OFF!



AFTER THAT WE DID IT "NORMALLY" BUT I WASN'T THERE.

I FELT NAUSEA.

SO MANY TIMES
I'D AWAKE TO CELIA
ACCUSING ME OF HIDING
MONEY SO THAT SHE
COULDN'T SHOOT UP.



I'D USE ANY EXCUSE
TO INDULGE MY FEAR
OF THE FEMININE,
AND CELIA GAVE ME
EVERY OPPORTUNITY.



THE COMING OF
OUR FIRST BABY
GAVE ME HOPE!



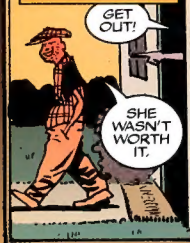
BUT EVEN WITH
CHILD, CELIA
CONTINUED HOOKING
FOR DRUG MONEY.



I'D OFTEN THROW
STRANGERS OUT
OF OUR BEDROOM.

GET
OUT!

SHE
WASN'T
WORTH
IT.



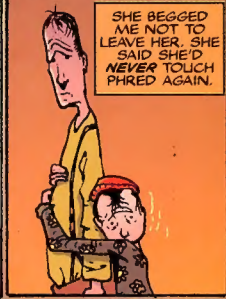
I NAMED OUR SON
PHRED. HE WAS
AMAZING. I LOVED
THE LITTLE GUY. FOR
THE FIRST TIME IN MY
LIFE I WAS HAPPY.



I SUSPECTED CELIA
OF BEATING PHRED, AND
SHE ADMITTED IT.



SHE BEGGED
ME NOT TO
LEAVE HER. SHE
SAID SHE'D
NEVER TOUCH
PHRED AGAIN.



SHORTLY AFTER,
I HAD TO LEAVE
TOWN FOR A
WEEK ON
BUSINESS.



CELIA WAS
PISSED! BUT I
HAD TO GO.

FINDING CELIA
HIGH WHEN I
RETURNED WAS
NO SURPRISE,
BUT TO MY
HORROR...



...PHRED'S EYES
HAD BEEN
REMOVED,
WITH THE SKIN
SEWN OVER
THE SOCKETS.



CELIA SAID A DOCTOR
IN TOWN HAD NEEDED
AN EYE TRANSPLANT,
AND SHE'D SOLD HIM
PHRED'S EYES FOR A
BIG BOX OF
MORPHINE.



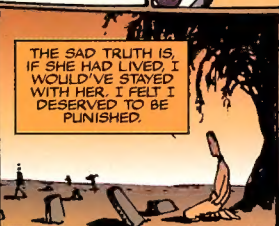
MY FEARS OF WOMEN
AND THE FEMININE
WERE WELL PLACED.
CELIA TOOK THE ONLY
THING I EVER LOVED,
AS PHRED DIED SOON
AFTERWARDS.



I WANTED TO
KILL CELIA, BUT
SHE BEAT ME TO
IT, O.D'ING A
MONTH LATER.



THE SAD TRUTH IS,
IF SHE HAD LIVED, I
WOULD'VE STAYED
WITH HER. I FELT I
DESERVED TO BE
PUNISHED.



AND THAT'S THE
ONE THING ME
AND CELIA BOTH
AGREED ON.



2ND WIFE



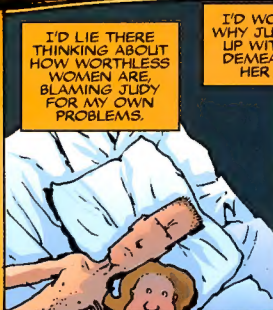
IN MY MID-THIRTIES I MOVED BACK TO THE STATES, AND MARRIED MY SECOND MISTAKE, JUDY.

JUDY WAS EVERYTHING CELIA WASN'T.

AND AFTER PHRED, I WOULD NEVER TRUST WOMEN AGAIN.

EXACTING REVENGE FROM JUDY FOR THE WAY CELIA HAD HUMILIATED ME MUST HAVE BEEN SOMETHING JUDY FELT SHE SOMEHOW DESERVED.

I COULD SEE THE SAME LOOK OF DEPENDENCE IN HER FACE THAT I SHOWED CELIA. SO WE TRADED PLACES. I WAS CELIA, AND JUDY WAS...ME.



I'D LIE THERE THINKING ABOUT HOW WORTHLESS WOMEN ARE, BLAMING JUDY FOR MY OWN PROBLEMS.

I'D WONDER WHY JUDY PUT UP WITH ME, DEMEANING HER SO.

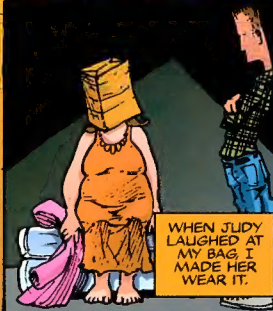
BUT I ALREADY KNEW THE ANSWER, AFTER LIVING WITH CELIA.



JUDY NEVER UNDERSTOOD WHY I'D GET SICK TRYING TO MAKE LOVE, BUT IT ALWAYS HAPPENED.



I'D NOTICE JUDY SNEAKING BOOZE INTO THE BATHROOM WHEN SHE THOUGHT I WAS ASLEEP.



WHEN JUDY LAUGHED AT MY BAG, I MADE HER WEAR IT.



THE THRILL OF HUMILIATING SOMEONE ELSE WAS EXCITING FOR A CHANGE.

PUFF PUFF PUFF PUFF PUFF PUFF PUFF PUFF PUFF PUFF

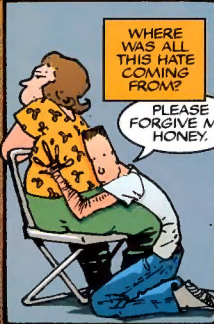


BUT LATER I FELT GUILTY.

SOS SNIFF

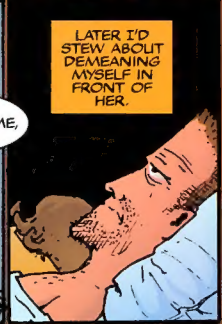


CELIA WAS ONLY OBLIVIOUS...I WAS BECOMING A CRUEL PERVERT.



WHERE WAS ALL THIS HATE COMING FROM?

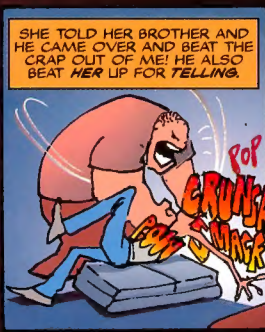
PLEASE FORGIVE ME, HONEY.



LATER I'D STEW ABOUT DEMEANING MYSELF IN FRONT OF HER.



THINGS GOT UGLY, ONCE I CAUGHT JUDY DRINKING AND SLAPPED HER AROUND.



SHE TOLD HER BROTHER AND HE CAME OVER AND BEAT THE CRAP OUT OF ME! HE ALSO BEAT HER UP FOR TELLING.



THAT NIGHT JUDY HEARD ME TALKING IN MY SLEEP. WHATEVER I WAS SAYING WAS GIVING ME NIGHTMARES...



THE NEXT MORNING SHE TOLD ME...

YOU WERE TALKING IN YOUR SLEEP... YOU SAID...



I MUST'VE BLACKED OUT AT THOSE WORDS BECAUSE...

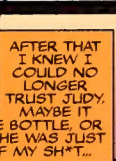


...I AWOKE TWO DAYS LATER, IN THAT SAME SPOT!

JUDY HADN'T CALLED A DOCTOR OR ANYTHING!!

SHE JUST LEFT ME THERE LIKE THAT FOR TWO WHOLE DAYS.

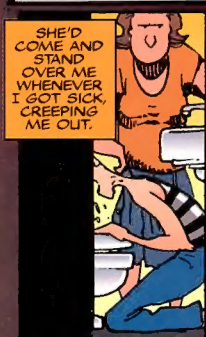
WAS THE BOTTLE, OR MAYBE SHE WAS JUST SICK OF MY SHIT...



AFTER THAT I KNEW I COULD NO LONGER TRUST JUDY. MAYBE IT WAS THE BOTTLE, OR MAYBE SHE WAS JUST SICK OF MY SHIT...



WHATEVER IT WAS, SHE'D FOUND A WEAK SPOT.



SHE'D COME AND STAND OVER ME WHENEVER I GOT SICK, CREEPING ME OUT.



AND SHE'D DRINK IN FRONT OF ME NOW! SHE DIDN'T CARE!



SHE WENT ALONG WITH MY GAMES...



BUT I COULD FEEL HER HATRED...

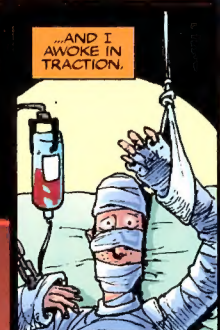


...READY TO...

...BLOW.



ONE DAY SHE WHISPERED THAT SAME PHRASE...



...AND I AWOKE IN TRACTION.



WHEN I GOT HOME, JUDY HAD MOVED OUT FOR GOOD.

BY MY FORTIES I'D
MOVED AWAY TO
AUSTRALIA, TRYING
TO FORGET WHAT I'D
INFLECTED OR HAD
BEEN INFLECTED ON
ME BY VARIOUS
WOMEN IN MY LIFE.

I BEFRIENDED
SOME
ABORIGINAL
NATIVES WHO
TOOK ME IN.

I WAS HORRIFIED TO
FIND THAT A GROUP OF
THE NATIVE CHILDREN
THERE WERE VICTIMS OF
ORGAN EXPERIMENTS,
JUST LIKE PHRED.

I FELT A SPECIAL
BOND WITH
THESE CHILDREN
WHO CLUSTERED
AROUND ME,
BLINDLY FEELING
THEIR WAY.

I LIVED THERE FOR
YEARS, LEARNING
THEIR TRADITIONS,
THOUGH I OFTEN
FELT THEY WERE
HUMORING ME.

FOR YEARS I TRIED
TO MASTER THEIR
MAGICAL ART OF
"WALKING IN THE
DREAMTIME", WITH
NO SUCCESS.

UNFORTUNATELY,
I HAD NO IDEA
WHOSE IT WAS.

THEN, ONE DAY,
I DID IT! I'D
PENETRATED
SOMEONE'S
OUTBACK.

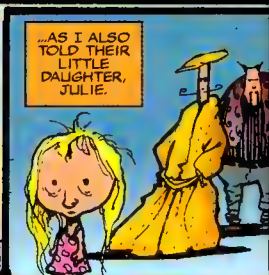
LATER I AWOKE ALONE
WITH NO SIGN OF THE
TRIBE. UPON RETURNING
TO TOWN, I WAS INFORMED
THE PEOPLE I LIVED WITH
DID NOT EXIST.



I RETURNED TO THE STATES TO VISIT AN OLD SCHOOL CHUM AND HIS WIFE.

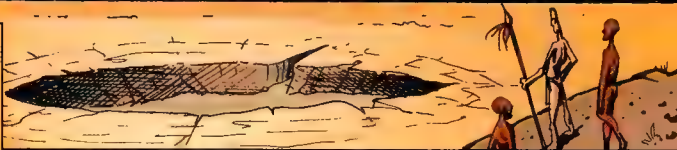


THEY TOOK ME IN, AND I TOLD THEM OF MY TRAVELS, AND ADVENTURES...



...AS I ALSO TOLD THEIR LITTLE DAUGHTER, JULIE.

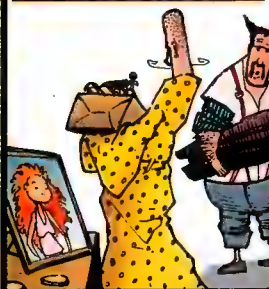
FOR I HADN'T JUST LEARNED TO WALK IN MINDS IN AUSTRALIA. NO, I HAD **REALIZED**. IN THAT MOMENT, THE **ONE REASON** I'VE BEEN ANGRY AND AFRAID OF WOMEN MY WHOLE LIFE--WHY I'D PUT UP WITH CELIA, AND WHY JUDY HAD PUT UP WITH ME, THE SICKNESS, THE PAPER BAGS, PARKAS, DEXTER, AUNT RUTH, **EVERYTHING** ALL CAME DOWN TO THIS ONE THING...



...BUT I FORGOT TO WRITE IT DOWN.

I REMEMBER IT HAD SOMETHING TO DO WITH... **ABUSE**, THOUGH.

ANYWAY, THE ABORIGINES HAD POWER SPOTS! HERE THEY WERE PUBLIC STORAGE BINS! I FOUND A CIRCULAR GROUP OF 24 BINS TO EXPLORE STRANGERS' 'OUTBACKS'.



I EVEN TALKED MY CHUM JOHN WINTERS INTO KEEPING HIS DAUGHTER'S OLD STUFF IN ONE. SHE'D GONE TO COLLEGE AND THEY NEEDED THE ROOM.



NOW, WITH JULIE'S STUFF STORED, I WOULDN'T BE LIMITED TO THE OUTBACKS OF 24 **STRANGERS**...

...I COULD WATCH SOMEONE I KNEW PERSONALLY, AS HER OUTBACK DEVELOPED.



I THOUGHT THIS STUFF WOULD MAKE ME FEEL **CLOSER** TO YOU!

INSTEAD I JUST FEEL SICK KNOWING ABOUT ALL THE ABUSE YOU **SUFFERED** THROUGH AND **GAVE** OUT! IT JUSTIFIES NOTHING...

I MEAN **JEEZ!** IS THERE ANYBODY WHO **ISN'T** USING THE "I WAS ABUSED AS A CHILD, AND THAT'S WHY I DID IT" DEFENSE? GIMME A BREAK.



3RD WIFE

BY FIFTY YEARS OLD YOU'D THINK I'D'VE LEARNED, HUH? THE THIRD MISTAKE WAS A BLESSING IN DISGUISE, BECAUSE IT GAVE US YOU.

NO WAR

TILLY JONES WAS 17 IN 1971. I DON'T KNOW WHAT SHE SAW IN ME. SHE SAID MY OLD-FASHIONEDNESS WAS CUTE.

AND SHE BROUGHT OUT EVERYTHING THAT WASN'T.

BUT I PUSHED ALL THAT DOWN.

IT WAS LIKE HOPE ALL OVER AGAIN. THIS WAS MY SECOND CHANCE, AND I LOVED YOU, MORE THAN WORDS... LITTLE SARA.

SOON YOU CAME ALONG!

I KNEW I STILL HAD A RESERVOIR OF ANGER, LURKING...

...BUT I HID IT.

ONCE I AWOKE FROM A NIGHTMARE ABOUT HURTING YOU, LIKE CELIA HAD DONE TO PHRED!

I'D NEVER HURT ANY KIDS BEFORE, BUT I COULDN'T TAKE THE CHANCE...

TILLY STOPPED ME, WANTING TO KNOW WHY? WHY?!

THE CLOSER I GOT TO TILLY EMOTIONALLY, THE MORE I'D SPACE OUT IN BED AND JUST SEE...

...PATTERNS.

I TRIED TO ABUSE HER, LIKE JUDY, BUT SHE WOULDN'T PUT UP WITH IT.

THEN I TRIED TO GET HER TO ABUSE ME, BUT SHE DIDN'T UNDERSTAND WHY SOMEONE MUST BE HURT TO RECEIVE LOVE.

AND WHEN I TRIED TO EXPLAIN...

...I THREW UP.

I BROKE DOWN AND TOLD HER ALL ABOUT CELIA AND JUDY...



...THAT I HAD DUMPED ALL OF MY ANGER FROM WIFE #1 ONTO WIFE #2, AND I COULD ONLY PERFORM WITH "PROPS".

AFTER MAKING HER SWEAR NOT TO LAUGH, I SHOWED HER MY BAG AND PARKA.



SHE SAID

I BET I CAN MAKE YOU FORGET THAT BAG FOR GOOD.



I WANTED TO CRY. NEVER HAD ANYONE TRIED SO HARD...

BUT I JUST COULDN'T HELP IT. FOR HER SAKE, I ACTED EXCITED, BUT INSIDE I CRINGED AND WANTED TO DIE.

MY ONE SOLACE WAS YOU. UNTOUCHED AND UNSPOILED, AS I ONCE WAS. REMEMBER HOW I USED TO GIVE YOU A RIDE ON MY BACK, LIKE A PONY?



IN THE QUIET OF THE NIGHT, TILLY SAID

YOU ACT LIKE YOU WERE ABUSED.

I DIDN'T KNOW.

TEARS STARTED TO STREAM DOWN MY FACE, BUT I DIDN'T KNOW WHY, SHE ASKED

IF YOU KEEP DUMPING ANGER ON EACH NEW WOMAN, WHO DUMPED IT ON YOU IN THE FIRST PLACE?

I TOLD HER ABOUT MY LIVING ALONE WITH MY AUNT, BUT SHE SAID THAT WOMEN ALMOST NEVER ABUSE MEN. IT MUST BE SOMEONE ELSE.

I TRIED TO... REMEMBER...

BIG MISTAKE.

...ONLY GLIMPSES...

THEN I TOLD TILLY ABOUT MY NIGHTMARE OF ABUSING YOU. I THOUGHT IT WAS IMPORTANT TO SHARE.

SHE GOT REAL QUIET. SHE NEVER LOOKED AT ME THE SAME AFTER THAT.



IN HER MIND, I WAS CAPABLE OF INFLECTING THE ABUSE I MIGHT HAVE SUFFERED! IT WAS THE BEGINNING OF THE END.

THE WEEK AFTER SHE TOOK YOU TO HER MOM'S...

I JUST DON'T FEEL SAFE ANYMORE, ARTIE.



I KNOW YOU LOVE SARA, BUT I CAN'T RISK HER SAFETY. AND IF YOU LOVE HER, YOU'LL AGREE.

TIL--
...IT'S JUST...



WHAT COULD I SAY? SHE WAS RIGHT. MY NEED TO BE WITH YOU WAS LESS IMPORTANT THAN THE DANGER THAT I'D MESS YOU UP.



ALTHOUGH I'D NEVER MESSED ANYONE ELSE UP, UNLESS THEY WERE OF CONSENTING AGE.



I KNEW I'D NEVER HURT YOU, BUT I ALSO KNEW THAT TILLY WOULD NEVER SEE THAT.

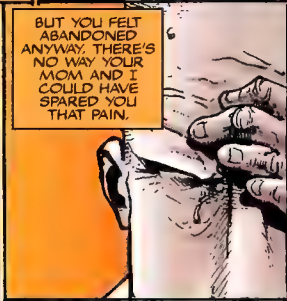


THE WORST PART WAS THAT LAME STORY OF MY KILLING MYSELF YOUR MOM CAME UP WITH...

...TO SAVE YOU THE PAIN OF THINKING I'D LEFT YOU BEHIND AND RUN OFF.



BUT YOU FELT ABANDONED ANYWAY. THERE'S NO WAY YOUR MOM AND I COULD HAVE SPARED YOU THAT PAIN.



LATER I REMEMBERED ABOUT DEXTER THE BABY SITTER.

THAT'S WHO IT MUST HAVE BEEN, AND HE'S A MALE, IT'S HIS FAULT!

I TOLD TILLY, HOPING WE COULD GO BACK TO THE WAY IT WAS.

SHE JUST SHOOK HER HEAD, SAYING I NEEDED HELP.



I SUNK INTO A SEWER OF SELF-HATRED.

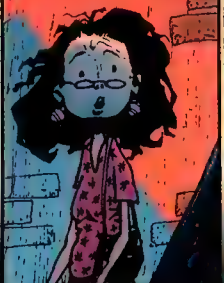
IF YOUR MOTHER THOUGHT I WAS A MONSTER, IF SHE WOULD TAKE AWAY THE ONLY PERSON I COULD FEEL LOVE FOR, THEN I WOULD BECOME ONE...

...HURTING EVERYONE AND EVERYTHING AROUND ME!

I ALWAYS REMEMBER FEELING THAT WHEN I ATTACKED THOSE WOMEN...

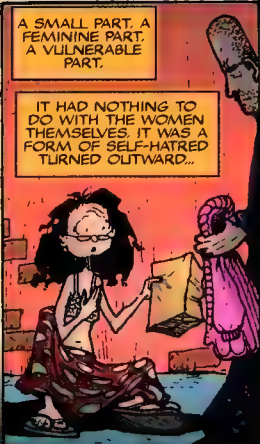


...THAT I WAS REALLY TRYING TO HURT A PART OF MYSELF.



A SMALL PART. A FEMININE PART. A VULNERABLE PART.

IT HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH THE WOMEN THEMSELVES. IT WAS A FORM OF SELF-HATRED TURNED OUTWARD...



...THOUGH I'M SURE THIS DISTINCTION WAS POINTLESS TO THEM.



I STILL
WATCHED
YOU...

...FROM A
SAFE...

...DISTANCE.

WATCHING
YOU...

...GROW...

...KNOWING
THAT, ONE DAY...

...YOU'D
RESENT
ME FOR
LEAVING.

BLAM

UNFORTUNATELY,
AFTER MY OUTBACK
EXPERIENCES, I
FOUND THAT WHILE
MY HEAD COULD BE
BLOWN OFF....

....I
COULDN'T
DIE, SO I
JUST HAD
TO SEW IT
BACK ON.

WHAT A CRUEL
TWIST OF FATE,
DENYING DEATH
TO A MAN WHO
WANTS IT *MOST*.

ANYWAY, I
WATCHED AS
THE PUBLIC
STORAGE
GARAGES
EVENTUALLY
CLOSED...

...BUT THE FACTORY WENT
BELLY UP, GIVING ME THE
CHANCE TO SNEAK IN AND
RECLAIM THOSE ORIGINAL
24 BINS OF MEMORIES AND
OUTBACKS TO PLAY IN.

...AND A FACTORY FOR
MANUFACTURING JAR
RUBBERS WAS BUILT
RIGHT ON TOP OF THE
ABANDONED STORAGE
BINS. WELL, THAT
SLOWED DOWN MY
OUTBACK TRIPS...

HERE'S HOW IT
WORKED. I'D
STORED JULIE'S
STUFF IN BIN
EIGHT, LIKE I
TOLD YOU, JUST
TO WARM UP....

I PUT *YOUR* OLD
TOYS IN SIX, SO
I COULD KEEP
AN EYE ON YOU,
FROM INSIDE
TO MAKE SURE
YOU WERE OKAY.

AND
EVERYONE
ELSE...

...WELL,
IMAGINE GOING
INTO THE MINDS
OF 22 COMPLETE
STRANGERS.
UNFORTUNATELY,
NOT EVERYONE'S
INTERESTING.

NOBODY HAD
ANY **DEEP DARK**
SECRETS THAT
I'D RECOGNIZE
BECAUSE I
DIDN'T KNOW
THEM **OUTSIDE**
THE BINS.

WANDERING
THROUGH **THESE**
PEOPLE'S
UNCONSCIOUS
MINDS GOT
BORING QUICK.

I GREW CYNICAL, LETTING LITTLE
CREATURES FROM JULIE'S MIND
COME OVER, FOR KICKS. THEY
TURNED **NASTY** OVER HERE,
THOUGH, PROVING TO HAVE A
DEMENTED SENSE OF HUMOR.

POP
POP

SPLAT

WOOSSESS

RIP
CRANG

BUT SITTING THERE IN
A BATHROOM FULL OF
ISZ, ALL ALONE, HAVING
LOST EVERYONE AND
EVERYTHING I EVER
CARED ABOUT...



...I
COULDN'T
HELP BUT
WONDER...

WHAT WAS SO
FEARFUL ABOUT
SEEING AUNT
RUTH AS SHE
REALLY WAS?

WHY DO I
ONLY REMEMBER
CERTAIN THINGS
ABOUT HER?



WHY DID THAT
CRAP WITH THE
BABY SITTER
JUST FEEL LIKE
THE TIP OF THE
ICEBERG?



ONE DAY IT
ALL CAME
TO A HEAD...

SHE'D DIED.
I WAS HER
LAST LIVING
RELATIVE.
HOW
PATHETIC.



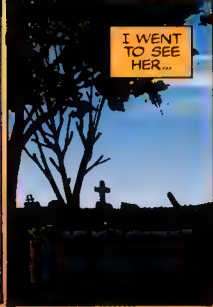
I COULD'VE FELT
A LOTTA THINGS,
BUT I MOSTLY
FELT TWO THINGS.

IRRATIONAL
FEAR...

...AND
INCREDIBLE
ANGER.



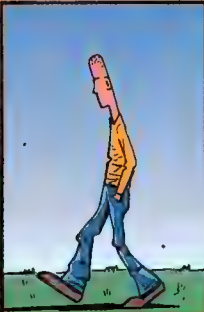
I WENT
TO SEE
HER...



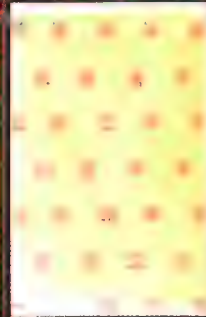
...BECAUSE
I WAS
SICK OF...



...BEING
AFRAID.



AND TO
REMEMBER...





...FLOATING...

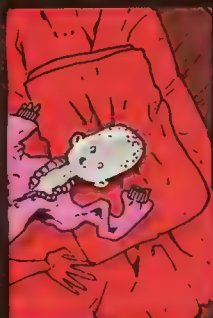


S'OKAY, JUST
LOOK UP...

...AND KEEP
FLOATING.



YOU EVER STARE
AT SOMETHING
FOR SO LONG...



...THAT YOU
FORGET WHY
YOU'RE LOOKING
AT IT IN THE
FIRST PLACE?



I HEAR HER
SHAMEFUL
CRYING NOW.

I HUG HER,
TO GET HER
TO CALM
DOWN.

SHE GETS
VERY QUIET,
TAKING
ANOTHER
DRINK.

SHE POURS
LIQUOR OVER
MY HEAD,
LAUGHING
AT ME.

SHE TELLS ME
I'M A NAUGHTY
BOY, AND SHOULD
BE PUNISHED
FOR WHAT...

...I DID TO HER.

THAT ALL
MEN ARE
PERVERTS.

SHE TELLS
ME THAT SHE'LL
SEND ME TO JAIL
FOR RAPING HER.
SHE PICKS UP
THE PHONE.

I START CRYING
AND SOBBING
AGAIN, BEGGING
HER NOT TO!

SHE SAYS I'M UGLY AND
PERVERTED, BUT SHE
LOVES ME ANYWAY.
SHE HUGS ME.

SHE SEEMS
GENUINELY
PUZZLED WHY
I'M CRYING
WIPING MY
TEARS.

SHE ASKS
IF I LIKE
LOOKING
LIKE A
SISSY.

GIGGLING
SHE SAYS
ONLY LITTLE
GIRLS WEAR
PINK PARKAS.

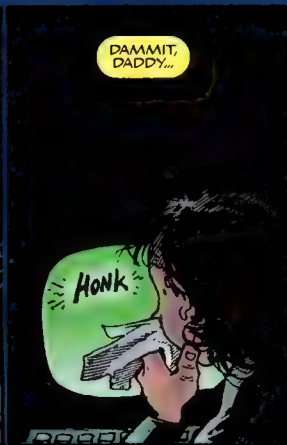
I PROMISE I'LL
BE GOOD...

...NOT MAKE
HER ANGRY
ANYMORE...

...WITHOUT
REALLY HAVING
THE SLIGHTEST
IDEA HOW.



DAMMIT,
DADDY...



...WHY'D YOU LEAVE
ME AND MOMMY? I
KNOW IF YOU'D'VE
KEPT TRYING, SHE
WOULD'VE LET YOU
COME HOME...



OKAY, BUT AT
LEAST I'D'VE
KNOWN.



BECAUSE OF YOU,
I'LL NEVER TRUST
MEN AGAIN.

SCREW YOU,
ARTIE.



NOT 'CAUSE OF
YOUR *CRIMES* OR
YOUR FEAR OF
HURTING ME...



...YOU
LEFT.

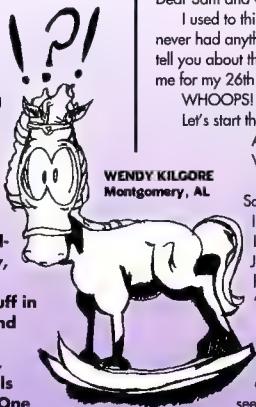
BECAUSE WHEN I
WAS FOUR YEARS
OLD AND NEEDED
YOU THE MOST...



MAXX paid a visit to Erik Larsen's Savage Dragon, recently, and Andy Mangles wrote a cool story about Sara in Gay Comics. Check 'em out.

There's been some squawking about a few parts being missing from the Maxx videotape of the MTV episodes. We were operating under the 2-hr tape limit, so I took out the complete Mako-Savage Dragon episode cuz it seemed to have the least relevance to the over-all story (sorry, Erik). If you haven't seen these shows, don't sweat it. There's stuff in the book that's not in the toon, and vice versa.

Head to Head: a huge success, including three marriage proposals so far (to other people, not me). One minor change, though, so listen up. It's not so cool to print your phone number and address in an international rag like this one, so we **STRONGLY ADVISE** you to use e-mail or post office box numbers. In fact, we advise it **SO** strongly that, as of next ish, we will **NO LONGER PRINT HOME ADDRESSES OR PHONE NUMBERS IN THE "PENPALS" SECTION** (sorry). That's right—for your safety and the privacy of other people living with you, **PENPALS MUST USE E-MAIL OR POST OFFICE BOX NUMBERS**. Other sections, like Creator stuff, Wanted, even Personals (which don't use



WENDY KILGORE
Montgomery, AL

Dear Sam and Company,

I used to think that your letter had to be fake, as I had never had anything similar happen to me. But I just have to tell you about the "surprise" that my wife had arranged for me for my 26th birthday...

WHOOPS! WRONG MAGAZINE!!

Let's start this over again.....

Adrian Grace
Victoria, Australia

Sam,

I think the new story line with Sara is perfect! I can't wait to get ahold of #25. I'm glad that Julie's son was in the beginning of #24. I hope Julie comes back. (She kinda has to 'cause there is a yellow slug after her.)

Sara is such a Great character! When I first found out about The Maxx (about 1 year ago), I could relate to her a lot. Some of her problems were similar to mine. She seems around my age, so I love her. In the newer comics she is 25 or so, but I still love her.

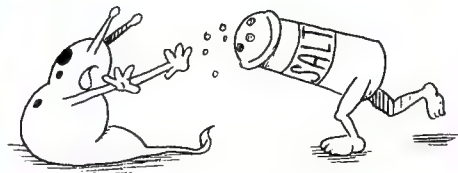
I recently read Friends of the Maxx and that was the best! It was so long and the whole story was so intriguing. Dude and Mickey are so great. They are lucky they have each other to love. Even though they fight a lot and keep secrets from each other, they need each other. I'm glad you created this, too.

See ya!
Jennifer Podagrosi
Phoenix, AZ

Dear Sam,

In the nexus of this tangled tale is The Maxx, the patron spirit of every person's personal spirit animal. His task is to bring people to a state of inner peace and harmony through journeys of self-realization in both the waking world and the subconscious land of Pangaea. The path is often long and difficult; subconscious symbols must be deciphered, personal behavior must be dramatically altered, and repressed past traumas must be dredged up and dealt with.

It should be noted, however, that Maxx is not the only universal symbol in this comic. The Isz, which occupy only Julie's Outback, are but two breeds of "grey-matter monstrosities." Isz of all shapes and sizes deal with one thing: the negative aspects of their hosts' thoughts. Think about it: Pitt saw a multitude of weeping Timmys, Julie saw ravaging predators (the psyche of a rapist), and Sara sees cutesy fairies (yuck). The fairies represent her disdain for sappiness



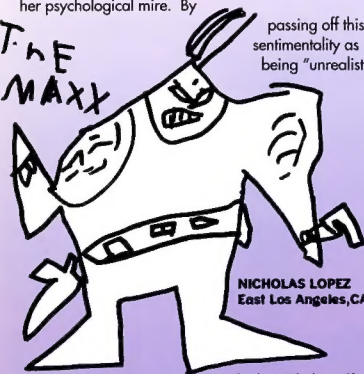
RALPH McBRIDE
Southland, New Zealand

addresses anyway, usually) can still use home numbers, but **NOT PENPALS**. I know—it's more trouble and expense, but not everybody out there is **SANELY** insane as we (and you) are. So—a minor change. Got it? Cool.

and traditional dependence upon parental figures, which is what she consciously scorns but (as ish #23 illustrates) deep down truly needs. The fairies also imply the "daddy's little darling" concept that she tried to shake but ended up temporarily accepting during issues #15-20. Now, as she reacquaints herself with her father, these fairies are one step closer to disappearing forever.

Precluding this disappearance is Iago, the actual symbol for Sara's obstacles on the path of healing. His task is to stunt her spiritual growth by taking those with above-average negativity in their lives to his fairy-lsz breeding ground. Figuratively speaking, each person of this type feeds Sara's fairies (reaffirms her cynicism). The sappy optimism in her life is represented by Iago people who try to reach her by using words which only push her deeper into her psychological mire. By

THE
MAXX



passing off this sentimentality as being "unrealistic,"

NICHOLAS LOPEZ
East Los Angeles, CA

she brought herself to her current malaise-ridden, surruptitious existence.

An interesting feature of the comic arises when Sara and Julie are contrasted. They're almost complete opposites, yet distinctly similar. This state stems from their respective childhoods. Julie's dominant and controlling mother gave her a sense of security, but feelings of being the "lowest in station." Sara, on the other hand, chose a big spirit animal because of a lack of parental influence. The linking factor between Sara and Julie is that both of their "Maxxes" represent the dangers of repressing "big stuff" like childhood traumas. The lesson here is to deal with things as they come to you, otherwise some big homeless guy will be assimilated into your brain and he'll talk weird and break things and stuff!

Charlie Barr
Fanwood, NJ

Interesting. But what does everybody else think?

Sam,

Just got around to reading Maxx Traxx #23, so I decided to let everyone know Norbert can most definitely procreate. I mean, he is hung like a...

Sat Kirpal
Guaynabo, Puerto Rico

Dearest Sam,

Am I curious as to a male Outback? Hell, yes! I'm out back all the time, and for once I'd like others to see how hard all that mowing is. So show us some man!

Matt Coshel
Neosho, MO

CHRISTOPHER ROBINSON
Butte, MT

Dear Mr. Kieth,

Could Mark's (Julie's son's) Maxx be female? After all, spirit animals are animals, and they can be of either sex, can't they?

Mike Betite
Verona, NJ

Dear Sam Kieth,

First of all, a big razzberry to those meat-breath ant teeklers that think MTV Maxxheads aren't true Maxxheads.

I rilly like the new series. I always thought Sara deserved some more attention. She was my favorite character since #4. I'm hoping to see more of her horse Maxx & possibly what her Outback looks like after all these years. A moment of silence for Pumpkin, Yakkity Takkity, Poochie, & Dial-A-Doodle. We hardly knew them. Oh, also, Mr. Kieth, have Sara take it easy on poor ol' Artie. He doesn't seem like the Mr. Gone of ten years past. He seems like a nice enough guy.

Mutt
Bedford, TX

P.S. I think Mark Winters' spirit animal should be a female fox.

Hey Sam,

Are you going to do a story arc about Mark Winters? What would his spirit animal be? How about a beaver? Us Canadian Maxxheads would love that, eh!

Eric Fisher
Ontario, Canada

P.S. Who would win in a fight to the death, an Is or an exploding fairy?

Foxes? Beavers? (Insert lewd joke here.)

I think fairies and Isz are the same

thing (see Charlie Barr's letter above). It just depends on who the viewer is. To Julie, they're Isz, to Sara they're fairies...maybe to Mark Winters they're...





Dear Mr. Kieth,
What about
Gone's Outback—a
Wasteland devoid of
Beauty, or Plentiful
with obscenities.

What's in his head!!
Who's his Mr. Gone,
who's trying to cor-
rupt him? Who's his
Maxx, trying to save
him? Is his Maxx
Sara, or Julie?

What if all his
fights were in his
head? That's why he
left, to get away from
it all, to wage the
battle in his mind.

His Maxx could be a Gone body with a Maxx mask. His
Gone could be a Maxx body with a Gone mask...

Mike Furs

**Hey, guy, don't wig out on me
here...(For more on Gone,
read this issue.)**

Dear Mr. Kieth,

I thought issue #24 was extremely
awesome! Sara trashing the pier was
very cool (you don't see that kind of
thing every day!) I think your decision
to warp ten years into the future is
also a nice twist to the story line.
Besides, we get to see what Sara is up
to and it's a chance to introduce new
characters. Those who disagree...IT'S
NOT YOUR COMIC BOOK!!!!

Thanks for listening,
Allan Glover
Arlington, TX

**Actually, I'm not really sure
whose comic book it is... It
just kinda keeps growing on
its own, like the mould in my bathroom.**

NOTICE—You did not send enough money for the Spock
Ears. You owe \$1.00. Also your Capt. Kirk outfit will arrive
shortly.

**Who says we
don't print
every letter
we get?**

Dear Sam
Kieth,

I'm only 8
but I think your

NOBODY
CARES ABOUT
ME ANYMORE

KIETH CHILTON
Burke, VA

comic is cool! But I
have a ques-
tion! Why
on Darker
Image #1
does Julie
hurt
The
Maxx,
but on
the

cover she loves him. I mean I know why she wants to hurt
him (she thinks he's a Youngblood). But...Well anyway I
love The Maxx comic book. I still can't decide if Spawn or
The Maxx is my best Image comic guy. Honestly what do
you think? Just because you made The Maxx doesn't mean
you have to say him. Be honest!

Your fan,
Graham Bounds
Baton Rouge, LA

P.S. My favorite guy in The Maxx comic book besides him is
Julie.

**I dunno—when I was your age I would've said
Spawn, I guess. And Julie's my other favorite
guy, too.**

Hey Sam!

Did you honestly think that no one would notice what
you did? You don't know, you say! Here, let me help you
out. In Maxx #24, p. 20 (the page with Iago's list)—that's
what. The second-to-last name crossed out is Tony Iommi's.
Don't pretend you don't know who that is. (For those who

don't know, he's the only original Black
Sabbath member who's still with the
band.)

It would take a lot more than a giant
banana slug to off Tony Iommi, and you
know it. Ever pull a stunt like that
again, and I'll get Ozzy Osbourne to
kick your butt.

A p***ed-off metal fan,
Ben Enos
Boston, MA

**Mike Heisler keeps putting real
people's names on Iago's list. I
told him not to, because it dis-
tracts from the story. But he
just laughs. Mike has a cruel
side.**

Dear Sam,

In a film class, I just watched A
Clockwork Orange for the first time
since reading The Maxx and watching

the toon. I realized that the movie at one point featured the
song, "I Wanna Marry a Lighthouse Keeper." I was won-
dering if we (the readers) are supposed to read any inter-
textual connections into your repeated use of the song in the
first half of the plot. Is it coincidence? Is Stanley
Kubrick/Clockwork Orange an influence? Visually, I find
both your book and Kubrick's films similarly stimulating. Or
are we supposed to read into the lyrics of the song kind of
an accidental intertext?

Admiringly,
Jeff Nordstedt
New Brunswick, NJ

**Intertext? Intertext? Now I feel stoopid. I just
like the song.**

Dear Sam,

I got a list of questions to ask you.

1. Which is rarer on the Maxx figure—you keep chang-
ing your mind.
2. When is the next Friends of the Maxx coming out?
3. I got the Maxx figure with the black Is and it is cool; are
there any other figures coming out.
4. Is there an actual Maxx movie coming out?

Sean S
Dayton, OH



1. That's cuz I keep forgetting...somebody tell me. Which one is rarer?
2. November.
3. No, not yet.
4. Working on it.

Sam Kieth,

I just wanted to say that Maxx is rad. One note: I sure hope you weren't ripping Art Suydam off. There's some very strong resemblances between Sara's hat and Cholly's hat from "Cholly and Flytrap" by Suydam.

Tony I.
Worcester, MA

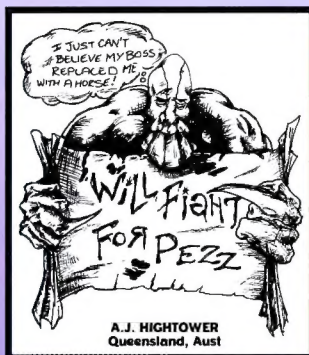
You're right—the checkered pattern on Sara's hat is definitely Suydam. Good eye. Actually I ripped off Suydam, and Suydam ripped off Frazetta, and Frazetta ripped off...uh...no, I think Frazetta made it all up to begin with. Sigh.

Dear Sam, the Maxximum plot man,

I've been buying comics for seven years now, and I've experienced plots that were good, bad, or indifferent. But after the first few months of reading (that's reading, not collecting), most stories didn't get to me anymore. After the initial wonder wore off, the stories, no matter how good they were, never affected me emotionally. Only twice in the entire time since I've been reading comics has an issue gotten to me. The Maxx #25 is that second time.

Julie Winters is dead.

Not in danger of being dead, not in jeopardy, not on the edge. She's gone, and



Maxx is one of those few comics where the dead stay dead.

I don't know where you're going to go with this, I really don't (that's another unusual thing for the comics I read), but I'm sticking around.

Jay McIntyre
Doylestown, PA

I'm glad I was able to develop a character that you care enough to miss. But there's dead, and then there's...dead...

JESSE ROOSEN
Belgium



OK, NOW, ONE MORE TIME: NO MORE HOME ADDRESSES/ PHONE NUMBERS FOR PENPALS. Use e-mail or p.o. boxes. (This applies to everyone who sent in a Penpal ad after July 20. If yours doesn't appear this month, and you sent it in around July 20 or after, please re-submit it, along with an e-mail or p.o. box number.)

PS/HOUSEKEEPING DETAILS WE GET ASKED ALL THE TIME: No subscriptions or retail sales available/sorry. Use "Head

to Head" to find back issues/fan clubs/whatever (use the address in the indicia)/postcards are cheap and easy like us/**WRITE LEGIBLY.** No we don't print all the letters or art we get/too many/yes we do read them ALL/you might get answered or printed or edited/you might not/life's funny that way. B&w art has better chance of being published than color/can't return artwork/sorry. Keep 'em coming/the better the letters and submissions, the better the book! Oh yeah.

JOHAN DE ZWART
Holland

MIKE BOISSONEAUT
Fall River, MA





JOE BERGIN III
Las Vegas, NV